



Working Together for all Nurses:

Manitoba's Nursing Colleges Team Up to Take on New Legislation

The medical assistance in dying nursing advisory group is made up of members from all three nursing colleges in Manitoba: the College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba (CRNM), the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Manitoba (CLPNM) and the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Manitoba (CRPNM). This group works together to inform and develop education supports for nursing practice related to medical assistance in dying.

Where We Started

Medical assistance in dying is changing the health-care landscape and we recognized long ago that the impact is broader than just one nursing regulatory body. With a goal to provide a consistent message to all nurses in Manitoba, we knew this was something we needed to work on together.

Before medical assistance in dying became legal in Canada, the three college's came together to talk about how we collectively could approach this topic. From there, we established the advisory group that has grown to include members from all three colleges who work in a variety of practice areas and locations in the province. We respect our collective contribution to health care and are learning together as we guide Manitoba's nurses through this new legislation.

We started our work in early 2016 and brought the whole advisory group together for our first meeting in June 2016. During the early stages, we produced a joint statement between our three regulatory bodies that explains legislation on medical assistance in dying and conscientious objection. This statement is still available on each of our college's websites as an ongoing, up-to-date resource for nurses. Our early work also meant keeping pace with changes in legislation as it evolved, reviewing current literature and following provincial, national and international discussions and challenges that other groups are experiencing.

Where We've Been

This past fall, we presented at CRNM's annual Education Day to share our history, what we're currently working on and how we're moving forward as an advisory group. At the event, we took time to explain what conscientious objection means and teamed up in groups to work through hypothetical scenarios where medical assistance in dying may come into play in a nurse's practice. CRNM's Education Day is traditionally only available to RNs, but we knew it was important to open this event to all nurses looking to learn more.

While we're lucky to be a strong team, we've definitely faced some challenges such as getting everyone to the table for robust discussion and ensuring the messages we provide are applicable to all nurses in all practice areas. What's been important to our success is having the nurses on the Medical Assistance in Dying Provincial Services Team participating in our meetings and sharing their direct care experiences. We're also fortunate to have a representative from the Manitoba Provincial Health Ethics Network join our discussion to talk about ethical scenarios surrounding a medically assisted death.

While we can't always predict what lies ahead, what we do know is that it's crucial to share our resources, experiences, perspectives and knowledge as we navigate this major change in our health-care system. Working together helps us provide a unified approach, avoids confusion and lowers the risk for miscommunication.

Where We're Going

As the practice and discussions around medical assistance in dying evolve, we are constantly evaluating our work. We've taken feedback from members of the advisory group and are currently working on developing guidelines that nurses and employers can use this year.

Shifting our thinking from our individual silos to a more collective vision has helped us grow as individuals and professionals. Our work has also opened the door further for additional collaboration as we move forward with *The Regulated Health Professions Act* in the near future.

While it's an excellent opportunity to come together at this time in history, we feel it makes sense too. Just as interprofessional collaboration improves client outcomes in direct care, we believe our collaborative effort will improve outcomes for all nurses and clients.

The following is a joint article written by Darlene O'Reilly RN, Tracy Olson LPN and Ryan Shymko RPN. This team of three leads the nursing advisory group and each works as a practice consultant with their respective nursing college.



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